

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

SUB A6

1. A method of assisting users in selecting items from an electronic catalog of items, the catalog accessible to users of an online store that provides services for allowing users to purchase items from the catalog, the method comprising:

5 providing a database which contains information about a plurality of user communities, wherein different communities represent different subsets of users of the store;

tracking online purchases of items from the store by the users to generate purchase history data, and storing the purchase history data in a computer memory;

10 processing at least the purchase history data to identify at least one item which, based on pre-specified criteria, has become popular within a particular community; and

electronically notifying members of the community that the at least one item is popular within the community.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein electronically notifying members of the community comprises generating a Web page which includes a community-based most popular items list.

3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the most popular items list is a bestsellers list.

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4. The method of Claim 1, wherein electronically notifying members of the community comprises automatically generating and sending an email message to members of the community.

5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the email message contains contact information of at least one member of the community that has purchased an item described in the email message.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein processing the purchase history data to identify at least one item comprises identifying a set of characterizing purchases for the community.

7. The method of Claim 1, wherein the community is an implicit membership community.

8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the community is based on email addresses of users.

9. The method of Claim 1, wherein the community is an explicit membership community.

5 10. The method of Claim 1, wherein the community is derived from an electronic address book of a user.

11. The method of Claim 1, wherein the community is a composite community which comprises multiple other communities of the database.

SUB A8 > 12. A system for assisting users of an online store in selecting items from
10 an electronic catalog of items, the system comprising:

at least one database which contains purchase history data for users of the store, and which contains information about a plurality of user communities wherein different communities represent different subsets of users of the store; and

15 a computer process which identifies items that are popular within particular communities of the plurality of communities by analyzing at least the purchase history data, and which notifies users of the store of the items that are popular within particular communities.

20 13. The system of Claim 12, wherein the process comprises a first process which generates a data store which contains bestselling items lists for at least some of the communities, and a second process which selects items from the table to display to users.

14. The system of Claim 12, further comprising a user interface which allows users to select and join at least some of the user communities.

25 15. The system of Claim 12, further comprising a user interface which allows a user to define a composite community that includes multiple communities of the database, and to initiate generation of a popular items list for the composite community.

30 16. The system of Claim 12, wherein at least some of the communities are implicit membership communities.

17. The system of Claim 12, wherein at least some of the communities are based on email addresses of users.

18. The system of Claim 12, wherein at least some of the communities are based on electronic address books of the users.

5 19. The system of Claim 12, wherein the process generates and displays community bestsellers lists for at least some of the communities.

20. The system of Claim 12, wherein the process compares a popularity of an item within a community to a popularity of the item among non-members of the community.

10 21. The system of Claim 12, wherein the process sends to the users notification emails that include descriptions of the items that are popular within particular communities.

22. The system of Claim 21, wherein at least some of the notification emails include contact information of users that have purchased items described therein.

15 23. The system of Claim 21, wherein at least some of the notification emails specify a level of acceptance an item has attained within a particular community.

SUB A9 24. The system of Claim 12, wherein the process identifies items that are popular within particular communities by at least identifying a set of items purchased by members of a community that distinguishes the community from a general user population.

20 25. The system of Claim 24, wherein the process uses a censored chi-square algorithm to identify the set of items.

SUB A10 26. A method of assisting users in selecting items from an electronic catalog of items, the catalog accessible to users of an online store that provides services for allowing users to purchase items from the catalog, the method comprising the computer-implemented steps of:

identifying a subset of users of the store that have email addresses that satisfy a particular criteria;

30 identifying at least one item that is popular among the subset of users, wherein the step of identifying comprises processing purchase history data of at least the subset of users; and

electronically notifying users of the store of a popularity of the at least one item among the subset of users.

27. The method of Claim 26, wherein identifying a subset of users comprises identifying all users of a selected email domain.

28. The method of Claim 27, wherein the selected email domain is an email domain of a selected company.

29. The method of Claim 26, wherein identifying a subset of users comprises identifying all users of a selected group of email domains.

30. The method of Claim 26, wherein electronically notifying comprises generating a Web page which includes a list of bestselling items among the subset of users.

31. The method of Claim 26, wherein electronically notifying comprises sending email notification messages to at least some of the users of the subset.

SUB All 32. A method of recommending items from a catalog of items, comprising: identifying a community of users that represents a subset of a general population of users;

tracking at least one type of user activity that indicates user affinities for particular items of the catalog to generate history data;

processing the history data of the general population of users, including the community of users, to identifying a set of items that distinguish the community from the general population; and

recommending items from the set of items to members of the community.

33. The method of Claim 32, wherein processing the history data comprises processing purchase history data, and the set of items consists essentially of items purchased by members of the community.

34. The method of Claim 32, wherein tracking at least one type of user activity comprises tracking item viewing events.

35. The method of Claim 32, wherein processing the purchase history data comprises applying a censored chi-square algorithm to the history data.

SUB A12 / 36. The method of Claim 32, wherein the community is an implicit-membership community.

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